

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CANCELLATION OF PARTY CONGRESS

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 387 B. NOUAKCHOTT A-59

SUMMARY: SECOND POSTPONEMENT OF CONGRESS OF MAURITANIA'S
SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY REFLECTS LEADERSHIP'S INABILITY
RE-ORGANIZE AND RE-INVIGORATE LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATION.

1. NOVEMBER 22 THE BUREAU POLITIQUE NATIONAL (POLITBURO OF
MAURITANIA'S SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY) ANNOUNCED WITHOUT
EXPLANATION, THAT THE PARTY CONGRESS SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY
POSTPONED UNTIL JULY. THIS IS THE SECOND POSTPONEMENT
(REF A) OF THE CONGRESS, NORMALLY HELD EVERY FOUR YEARS,
AND REFLECTS CONTINUED FAILURE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP TO
RE-ORGANIZE AND RE-INVIGORATE LOCAL PARTY STRUCTURE AND THUS
PROVIDE THE NECESSARY (I.E. TOTAL) SUPPORT FOR PARTY
AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AT THE CONGRESS. FUNDAMENTAL
CONTRADICTION WITHIN PARTY HAS BEEN LEFT TO FESTER WHILE
PARTY/GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP EXERCISED NEW FRANCHISE IN
ARAB LEAGUE AND SUCCESSFULLY LOBBIED FOR OVER 100 MILLION
IN PETRO-DOLLAR AID.

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2. EVER SINCE OULD DADDAH'S 1971 DECISION TO BROADEN BASE

OF PARTY BY ABSORBING BOTH MAURITANIA'S LABOR MOVEMENT AND YOUTH PROGRAM, PARTY RANKS HAVE BEEN SWELLED WITH YOUNGER, BETTER EDUCATED AND MORE IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED MAURITANIANS. ALTHOUGH PARTY WAS ORIGINALLY DESIGNED TO SUPPLANT LOCAL POWER OF TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS, IT HAS, IRONICALLY, PERPETRATED THAT POWER BY GIVING THESE TRADITIONAL LEADERS RANKING LOCAL PARTY POSTS. THE RESULT HAS BEEN THE DISINTERGRATION OF LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS AS TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND YOUNG TURKS VIE FOR CONTROL.

3. DICOTOMY IS NOT RELEGATED TOTALLY TO LOCAL LEVEL, WITHIN PARTY/GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP THE OLD GUARD LED BY MININTERIOR SALLAH FAVORS MAINTENANCE OF THE POWER OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS AS PRACTICAL APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT/PARTY CONTROL IN INTERIOR OF COUNTRY. YOUNGER MINISTERS AND SUB-CABINET OFFICIALS SUPPORTED BY PRESIDENT'S FRENCH-BORN WIFE PUSH FOR GREATER VOICE IN PARTY AFFAIRS FOR YOUTH, AND DOMESTIC POLICIES MORE IN LINE WITH MAURITANIA'S RADICAL THIRD WORLD FOREIGN POLICY.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE RAMPANT INFLATION, BLACK MAURITANIAN DISQUIETUDE OVER THE COUNTRY'S INCREASING ARAB RATHER THAN AFRICAN ORIENTATION AND SEVERE GENERATION GAP WITHIN THE PARTY, THE ONCE TURBULENT DOMESTIC SCENE IN MAURITANIA HAS BEEN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY QUIET FOR OVER TWO YEARS. THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SERIOUS LABOR STRIKE, RACE RIOT OR STUDENT DEMONSTRATION SINCE 1971. APPARENTLY THE RAPID PACE OF POLICY CHANGE (E.G. GIRM'S EXIT FROM THE FRANC ZONE, ADHERANCE TO THE ARAB LEAGUE, AND LOOSENING TIES WITH FRANCE), NOT TO MENTION THE DROUGHT HAVE KEPT THE ACTIVE POPULATION DIVERTED. THE HONEYMOON, HOWEVER, IS LIKELY TO END SOON UNLESS OULD DADDAH TACKLES URGENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AT HOME AND FORSAKES HIS INTERNATIONAL WANDERINGS WHICH CAN PARALYSE GOVERNMENT HERE FOR WEEKS AT A TIME. SHURTLEFF

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